

Lessons in Love

by dixiedreaming

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Summary: After returning from her honeymoon, Scarlett overhears a conversation which challenges her preconceptions and makes her wonder whether she hasn't been missing out on something all along. What impact will these unfolding revelations have on her life and how will they affect her relationship with a certain Captain Butler?

1. Chapter 1

Scarlett sighed as she eyed up her lackluster cards, annoyed that once again it looked like she was destined to be on the losing side. Usually, she was unbeatable at whist for the game lent itself well to her naturally calculating and analytical mind and it was a rare occasion when she found herself unable to outsmart her opponents.

Of course, this was the first time she had been saddled with the flibbertigibbet Bridget Flaherty as a partner. The woman was simply hopeless and Scarlett had spent the better part of the afternoon trying and failing to make up for her many mistakes. It didn't help that Bridget was already in her bad books for having dared to wear a green dress to last week's gathering at the Gelert's when Scarlett had already informed everyone of her own intentions to do precisely that. As such they both ended up arriving in almost identical ensembles and the ensuing embarrassment had been enough to ruin an otherwise pleasant evening.

Her irritation rising as she recalled the event, Scarlett decided she wasn't willing to hand over anymore of her hard earned money to the likes of Mamie Bart and Sylvia Connington. Throwing down her cards in a fit of peak, she stood up and declared she was going to go and see where Mammy had gotten to with their drinks.

The other women startled slightly at her sudden movement, for all were more than a little intimidated by her superior social standing and infamous bad temper. Taking in their reaction, Scarlett smiled to herself, enjoying the esteem in which they held her and the power it allowed her to wield over their heads. It was particularly satisfying

to be assured of their loyalty as since returning from her honeymoon in New Orleans, Scarlett had seen little of the Old Guard. Indeed, were it not for Melanie and Aunt Pitty's visits and the odd, increasingly infrequent calls from the men Rhett had helped save in the Shanty Town raid, the Butlers would have been almost completely cut off from the entire pre-war population of Atlanta.

Most days this growing divide didn't trouble Scarlett much, the mills and shop kept her far too busy to contemplate such matters and, besides, she had found herself a gang of new and better friends to pass the time of day with, friends who didn't drone on endlessly about the past but instead chose to live exclusively in the present. Friends who talked about interesting, exciting things like balls and fashion and money and who shared Scarlett's own unsentimental, practical outlook on life.

Still, it was a shame that more people hadn't come to marvel at her new home. After months of living at a suite in the National and having to visit the contractors and builders each day to hurry them along and make sure everything met her exacting standards, Scarlett was a little put out that so few of her old enemies had had the chance to feel themselves grow sick with envy at the sight of the plush red carpets and opulent, multi-mirrored walls that adorned her new abode.

It was to this end that she had decided to host a party, or 'crush' as it was now fashionably termed, in a few weeks time. The gathering would be a perfect opportunity for her to invite every last old cat or jealous, plain-looking spinster who had ever dared to say spiteful things about her and show them just how wonderfully her life had worked out in the end. She knew that once they saw her beautiful home, larger and more splendid than anything this city had ever known before, they would be forced to take back their hateful opinions and admit that she was indeed a fine lady after all.

She'd invite her new friends as well of course, not so much because she actually wanted them there, but because it would show everyone just what gay, fun people she now chose to associate with. People could be so nasty towards her new set, Melanie was often quietly disapproving whenever Scarlett mentioned them while Rhett was downright contemptuous most of the time and even her own servants seemed to turn up their noses when she invited them round to the house.

Take Mammy for instance, Scarlett had clearly asked for their drinks to be brought through to the parlor almost an hour ago and yet still there was no sign of them appearing. It was insolence of the worst kind and Scarlett would not stand for it. After all, she was the mistress of this house and deserved to be treated as such. Ellen would certainly never have allowed such blatant disrespect to go unpunished and therefore neither should she.

Storming down the hallway towards the kitchen, Scarlett felt her temper flare when she pushed open the door to find Mammy and Lou speaking together in hushed tones, their frowning faces and unhappy eyes making the topic of their conversation all too painfully clear.

Outraged that her servants should think it fitting to talk behind her back in this manner, Scarlett's voice was angrier than she'd intended

when she hissed, 'Just what do you two think you are doing? Standing round and gossiping like a couple of old maids when there are plenty of jobs that need seeing to. Why Mammy, I told you to bring in drinks for me and the other ladies ages ago and still you haven't done it. If you're getting too old to carry out my orders then kindly let me know and I'll happily put you on the first train back to Tara tomorrow morning.'

'Dem ain' no ladies, Miss Scarlett.' Mammy said, unrepentant as she stared her employer down. 'Why, Miss Ellen an' Ah done raise yo' better dan dis. Dem women is wurthless.'

Shocked by Mammy's bluntness and more hurt by the reference to her mother than she cared to let on, Scarlett had no choice but to turn and walk away before her emotions got the better of her, calling over her shoulder that Mammy had better have brought in the drinks in the next ten minutes or face suffering the consequences.

_How dare she speak to me like that? _Scarlett fumed as she made her way slowly back to the parlor, fighting to regain control of herself as she went. To be criticized by her own servant was simply too big an affront to be tolerated. Blocking out the small voice in her head which recognized the truth in Mammy's words, she instead forced her anger to switch directions, pushing it towards the man who always seemed to bear the brunt of her ire these days.

Rhett was after all guilty of being far too lenient with Mammy, always consulting her on how best to run the household or deal with the children, bowing to her opinion as if it was the only one that mattered and often completely disregarding Scarlett's own thoughts on the subject in the process. There was something downright unmanly in the way he deferred to her. It was a strange notion as Rhett was without doubt the most masculine person she had ever met and yet still it seemed to her almost as if he reverted back into a little boy in such moments, almost as if his longing to be accepted by her overrode his usual domineering tendencies.

She'd argued with him about it already of course, in fact there were precious few subjects that they hadn't seemed to argue about recently.

It was strange as they had gotten on so well together throughout their honeymoon and then again when they stayed together at the National. Rhett had been so gentle with her during that time, relinquishing his usual jeering bluster in favor of giving into her every demand and going out of his way to make sure all her whims became a reality.

She should have known such unusual behavior could not be expected to last, the man was a first-rate skunk after all and he was bound to tire of playing the doting husband after a while. Still though, she could not help but regret that it had ended so soon, it had been nice not to fight with him for a while, to know she could turn to him with her questions and concerns without fear of evoking his scorn or mocking laughter and that no matter how tiring or frustrating her day might have been, at night he would always be there to wrap her up safely in his arms and make everything feel just that little bit better.

Almost the very moment they first stepped through the door of their

new home though his attitude had changed considerably. Gone was a tentative intimacy they had shared while away and in its place settled a cool form of detachment. It was almost as if, in passing over the threshold, they had somehow transformed from husband and wife into polite but distant acquaintances.

Recently though even that thin veneer of politeness had faded away, replaced instead by cruel jibes and loaded, uncomfortable silences. She didn't know what had brought about this change in him for certainly she had done nothing to provoke it. She treated him in exactly the same way she always had and couldn't understand why this no longer seemed to be enough for him when he'd never taken exception before.

Sometimes when she turned around quickly or glanced at him subtly out of the corner of her eye, she'd catch sight of that old cat at a mouse hole stare and wonder if it was just her imagination or if his lips really were a fraction more pursed nowadays, his jaw a little more strained as if it was beginning to pain him to have to continue sitting back and waiting instead of simply pouncing upon his prey.

Part of her wanted to know what it was that he was waiting for, to ask him why he looked at her so strangely in these unguarded moments, but in the end she decided it simply wasn't worth the effort. The man had always been a mystery to her and no doubt always would be; in all the time she had known him she couldn't once recall him ever having given her a straight answer in response to a personal question and she didn't have the patience to try and decipher his usual riddles anymore.

If he wanted to, he would tell her and, if not, she had plenty to be getting along with anyway. Rhett was only a small part of her life these days and if she missed the closeness that had sprung up on them after the wedding then she would certainly never allow herself to admit it.

Nearing the parlor door, she paused for a moment to flatten her skirts and roll her shoulders as if shaking off all the unwanted thoughts she'd managed to stack up since leaving the kitchen.

'Did I tell you Alice Gelert came to see me yesterday?' Mamie Bart said, her voice floating out into the corridor and bringing Scarlett up short.

'No, whatever did she want?' Bridget asked, her common brogue utterly foiling her attempts to sound like a upper-class lady as always.

Indeed, the three of them were always trying so hard to sound refined around Scarlett, taking her plantation-owning heritage as a sign of her good breeding and hoping to break their way into Atlanta's upper echelons by riding on the back of her skirts.

'She's in the family way and wanted my help getting out of it.'

Pressing herself against the wall, Scarlett bit her tongue to stay quiet and keep them ignorant of her presence. They rarely dared gossip around her for fear of revealing their seedier natures and she

was eager to hear more of what went on behind closed doors. Of course she knew a lot of it already, Rhett having decided to divulge all the dirty little secrets they and their husband's sought to conceal one night when they'd lain awake together at the hotel, feeling oddly close as they whiled away the hours before dawn by laughing loudly at the absurdities of others.

'Again? Why, that must be the third time in the last two years.' said Sylvia in disbelief.

'Try the fourth.' Mamie Bart whispered. 'You know how she is though, I've told her time and again how to go about avoiding it, but she won't have it, says it's not half so pleasurable that way. It'll most likely kill her, but she just won't stop. You'd think she was still a newly wed the way she carries on.'

'Speaking of newly-weds,' Sylvia said, her voice dropping even lower so Scarlett had to strain to catch her next words. 'I notice Mrs. Butler isn't expecting yet. Strange given the fine figure of a man she's married to, don't you think?'

'Ah, but you know how these country ladies are. They bring them up so pure and sweet that they think letting a man kiss them on the hand is the height of passion.' Sneered Mamie. 'A girl came to work in our establishment once who'd been brought up on a farm just this side of Greenville. She told me her mother used to say that being with a man was something that us girls just had to endure. Endure, by god! Can you imagine what that kind of thinking would do to you? Of course, after two weeks of 'enduring' she was soon quick enough to change her mind!'

'You think Scarlett feels the same way?' Bridget asked skeptically.

'I do, and what's more I'd be willing to put money on it too. You only have to look at the stiff way she walks around to know she ain't never been introduced to the good things in life.' Mamie claimed, the cracks in her speech beginning to show.

Indeed the three of them had all started to regress back into their former, shadier selves, stripping off the guise of respectability like last night's ball gowns as they relished the chance to bring their self-professed leader down a peg or two.

'Poor girl,' said Sylvia, 'she doesn't even know what it is she's missing out on.'

The note of pity in her voice shook Scarlett out of the stupor she'd been languishing under for the last few minutes and made the blood rise hotly in her cheeks. How dare these women feel sorry for her? She who had so much more than they would ever have! How dare they look down on her like she was beneath them in some way?

Mammy had been right all along; they weren't ladies. They weren't even close.

To think she had invited them into her home only to have them speak so badly of her behind her back, laughing at her as if she had anything to feel ashamed of. If she did not enjoy marital relations it was because they were not meant to be enjoyed, every well-bred

women knew as much. In fact, it was one of the very first things you learnt during your days as a belle. That these women thought differently was simply a sign of their common natures, their low-born statuses, their...

'My dear, what are you doing lurking in the shadows? Didn't your mother ever teach you it's considered bad manners to listen in on other people's conversations?'

Startled, Scarlett spun around only to come face to face with a grinning Rhett Butler. Her heart seizing, she prayed hard that he had not been standing behind her for long, that he had not heard the vulgar things those dreadful women had been saying.

The very thought of it caused a sudden bout of nausea to overcome her and, unable to look at him for fear of what she'd find in his eyes, she kept her face down, studying the carpet so diligently one would have thought she had never seen its like before.

'Scarlett?' he questioned, a note of concern entering his voice as he took a step towards her.

Unwilling to let him get close, she sprung back. 'I'm not feeling well. Could you please tell Mammy to ask our guests to leave, I need to lie down for a while.'

'Certainly.' he said, reaching out a hand to touch her feverish cheek. 'Do you need me to help you up the stairs?'

'No, no, I'll be quite alright.' She stammered, pulling away and passing him quickly as she hurried up to her room.

Shutting the door forcibly behind her she fell upon the bed and pressed her face down hard into the pillow, wishing desperately that she'd never befriended such terrible, vile women in the first place.

Oh god, whatever must Rhett think of her if he had heard? To imply that she...no, she would not let herself think about it. Besides, surely Rhett would have seemed angrier if he'd caught their words? For all his nonchalance, he was a proud man and Scarlett did not think he would stand to hear his wife slighted so in their own home.

Unless...no, it was far too horrible a thought...she would not believe it, she wouldn't...but, well, it was Rhett and...what if...what if...

What if he agreed with them?

* * *

><p>First off, I owe everyone a really massive apology for leaving my earlier story, Sunshine through the Rain, unfinished. I was really busy for a couple of weeks after posting chapter two and when I finally sat down to start chapter three I drew a complete blank. I've had bouts of writer's block before, but this felt like a complete whiteout in comparison. I'm still not completely over it where that story is concerned, but the idea for this one popped into my head a couple of days ago and I hope that by writing it I'll be

able to get back into the GWTW groove and go back and finish STTR. I hate abandoned stories and I promise I will see it through.

In the meantime though, this is a shortish tale about Scarlett changing her perceptions about certain things and how that might have impacted on her relationship with Rhett. I always feel like any hope of them making it work disappears after Scarlett's reaction to her pregnancy, so I'm giving myself until then in the book's time frame (pages 845-862 in my copy) to get them together- it may or may not be enough!

_Hope you enjoy and please review- I love hearing all your thoughts.

_

P.S. This will probably need to be moved over to the m section in chapter 2 or 3 so remember to change your filter settings if you want to find out how it ends (fingers crossed you do!)

2. Chapter 2

_Thank you so much for all your reviews, favorites and follows- I can't tell you how ridiculously excited I get every time my phone buzzes with a new email notification, or how disappointed I am when it turns out to just another facebook update! I really appreciate you taking the time to let me know your thoughts and I'm so glad you like the new concept. For those of you more than ready for things to heat up, don't worry, as this will be the last chapter before we move to the M section. Hope you enjoy. _

* * *

><p>Clutching the pillow tightly between her hands, Scarlett tried and failed to push the awful thought from her mind. For what if Rhett really did share the opinion of those awful women? What if he too thought she was lacking in some way?<p>

It was true that since moving into their new home Rhett's nightly attentions had grown more infrequent. She hadn't given it much thought up until now for marital relations were hardly something she reveled in. Indeed, during her previous two marriages she'd done her utmost to keep them at a bare minimum. While Charles and Frank had been easy men to put off though, Rhett had proven himself to be anything but. During their time in New Orleans he'd been insatiable, forever touching and kissing her as they lay in bed together and whispering heated, sinful things in her ear until she could not help but give in to his advances.

Part of her inability to refuse him stemmed from the fact she almost didn't realize what was happening until it was too late. With Charles and Frank it had always been painfully clear what was about to happen, they had both been such awkward, hesitant creatures, stumbling over their words and making their intentions so blatantly obvious that it had been the simplest thing in the world for Scarlett to head them off before they got too far.

Yet with Rhett there was no such warning, no jarring action or sudden change in demeanor, every gesture and word slipped seamlessly into the next, building her up and cocooning her in warmth so that by the time she regained her senses and realized what was about to happen,

she was too relaxed to protest and couldn't have raised a hand to stop him even if she'd wanted to. He was altogether far too dangerous a creature for her liking, able to play with her emotions and cloud her senses until she lost all sense of herself, clinging to him desperately as if he were the only solid thing in a world turned suddenly upon its head.

It had been almost a week though since he had last touched her in that way. Up until now she'd been almost relieved for his advances brought forth thoughts and emotions she could never quite name or grasp but which always left her feeling confused and vaguely unsatisfied, as if she were on the cusp of something extraordinary, so close to going over, and yet somehow unable to get there. She'd never felt anything remotely close to this with either of her previous husbands and had assumed that this was as good as it could reasonably be expected to get. But what if Mamie was right? What if there was a whole host of things that she'd never known existed and so had no clue how to go about asking for?

What if she'd been doing it wrong her entire life?

Perhaps that was why Rhett's ardor seemed to be waning. Perhaps the reality simply didn't live up to his expectations. After all, he'd told her when he proposed that he was only marrying her because he wanted her more than any woman he'd ever seen and couldn't get her any other way. He'd kissed her that day too; kissed her with so much passion and heat that for a moment she'd wondered if perhaps everything would feel different with him, if the things that had once seemed like the most unpleasant of duties could morph into something quite different if only he were the one doing them to her.

To some extent that had been true, laying with him wasn't painful like it had been with Charles or mortifying like it was with Frank; indeed she had one very hazy memory of a night where she'd drunk far too much champagne, a night where she'd woken up half of New Orleans by singing at the top of her lungs on the carriage ride back to the hotel. In this memory she recalled soft, teasing touches evoking sounds unlike any she'd ever made before and a look of stunned amazement burning down upon her from eyes so black they put the moonless night's sky to shame. Try as she might though, she could not remember anything more than these few heated flashes and part of her felt resentful that she had forgotten the rest, almost as if something crucial had been snatched away from her before she'd truly had the chance to understand or enjoy it.

Maybe if she could remember the remainder of that encounter she wouldn't feel so vulnerable now, so achingly exposed, as if the women's words had stripped away the hardened shell she'd been building up ever since the day she'd first learnt of Ashley's engagement. Somehow their few comments had managed to cut into her far more deeply than any of the old cat's barbs ever had, reducing her back to a scared newlywed, trembling on the bed while she waited for Charles to come to her. She'd felt so young that night, so ill-prepared for what was to come and now she couldn't help but wonder if there wasn't more of that terrified girl lingering inside her than she'd previously have liked to believe.

Rhett was a man of the world after all; he'd certainly never hidden his past from her or denied his involvement with other women. Why, he'd even admitted his connection to Belle Watling, a woman so loose

and immoral that she made Mamie Bart look like the patron saint of innocence and virtue. Scarlett shuddered as she considered for the first time how laughable she must seem to Rhett in comparison, how ignorant and silly and green.

These last few nights he'd even headed out after supper, barely stopping to kiss her goodbye in his rush to get out of the door. Fury now rose up in Scarlett, white-hot and blistering, as she realized that ghastly saloon had probably been his destination all along. To think that she'd even begun missing his presence at night as she lay awake in a bed that suddenly felt too empty for comfort. That she'd spent the last few days with a persistent gnawing feeling deep in the pit of her stomach, unable to concentrate properly on her businesses while wondering what was wrong with him, when all this time he'd been under that awful woman's roof, gambling and drinking and doing God knows what else.

She wondered if he discussed her with Belle, if they'd ever laughed at her naivety together over a nightcap or spent the small hours of the morning condemning her for her inexperience.

If he had, she would never forgive him. To be pitied by the three would-be ladies downstairs was bad enough, but to have a woman like Belle sit in judgement of her? Why, she would rather divorce Rhett right now and board the first train back to Tara than allow that to continue on unchecked.

A knock at the door interrupted her dark thoughts and hurriedly she flipped over onto her back, smoothing down her dress in a bid to hide her ruffled state.

'Come in.' She croaked weakly, remembering just in time to play the part of the invalid.

'How are you feeling?' Rhett asked as he entered the room, a frown marring his face as his eyes darted worriedly over her form.

'I'm a little better, thank you.' She replied, propping herself up against the headboard.

'I brought you some water and a slice of bread.' He said as he drew nearer. 'I consulted Mammy and she thought it best not to try anything richer until you're recovered.'

Bitting back a retort about Rhett's over-reliance on her most obstinate of servants, Scarlett nodded her head and reached to take the glass out of his hand.

'Thank you Rhett.' She said after she'd taken a sip. 'That was very thoughtful of you.'

'My dear,' he said, clutching his breast and adopting an expression of mock terror. 'I fear the situation is more dire than first assumed. I hardly recognize this docile woman in front of me.'

Scarlett glared up at him over the rim of the glass.

'Ah, now there's the wife I know and love. I was worried for a moment.' He said, and though he still teased her as always, Scarlett

couldn't help but notice his eyes appeared softer than she had seen them in quite some time.

Staring into them she tried to decipher whether or not he had heard the women's remarks, but as always he remained an enigma, his thoughts and feelings kept deliberately away from his face, no doubt shut up somewhere deep inside that she doubted he would ever grant her access to.

On feeling her gaze, Rhett tensed up slightly, a muscle in his jaw twitching as he returned her searching stare with a cool, blank one of his own. Despite his efforts to appear unconcerned though, there seemed to be an underlying tension to his posture, almost as if he were waiting eagerly to see what the next moment would hold. Scarlett had no idea why that should be though and she cursed him soundly for his ability to hide from her so completely.

Frustrated, she broke his gaze, unnerved by the idea of sharing her life with a man she knew practically nothing about. It seemed unnatural, impossible even, that a husband could lay with his wife each night and wake with her every morning and yet reveal nothing of what was truly going on inside his head.

She remembered fondly a time before all this deception, back when they'd used to share secretive buggy rides together, idly whiling away the hours by telling tales of their childhoods and often helping the other to find resolutions to their current business problems.

She didn't know exactly when or why they had lost it, but somehow or other the intimacy they'd so unthinkingly enjoyed in those days had disappeared sometime shortly after they'd said their vows, receding further and further away until all they seemed to have left to share these days was a bed and a surname.

As if he could hear her silent thoughts, Rhett chose that moment to reach out and cup her cheek.

'Where are you wandering off to, my pet?' he asked curiously, stroking along her jawline with the tips of his fingers. The unexpectedly touch made Scarlett shiver slightly and, shutting her eyes, she found herself longing for a return to the time when his every action towards her had been this achingly tender.

Not receiving an answer to his query however, Rhett pulled back, and Scarlett had to bite her lip to prevent herself from sighing at the loss.

'What are you doing?' she asked in confusion when she opened her eyes to find him pulling off his cravat while toeing off his shoes.

'Well, my dear, when a man comes home early with the express intention of spending time with his wife, he traditionally prefers to be in the same room as her. Although, if you'd prefer me to sit in the drawing room and shout up the stairs to you, then I'm sure we could try it your way too.'

Before she could think up a retort, he had rounded the bottom of the bed and was lying himself down beside her, the arm closest to her

extending outwards in a silent invitation.

This at least was one gesture she could still read just fine and after a few seconds of stubbornness which only made him smirk, Scarlett relented and moved into his embrace, laying her head upon his chest as his arms came round to encircle her.

Shutting her eyes, she breathed in deeply for a moment, enjoying the heady, masculine smell that was uniquely his as the thoughts that had plagued her this last half an hour mercifully died away and let her have some peace.

'I saw Mrs. Wilkes today.'

'Did you?'

'Yes. She invited us to dinner next week.'

Scarlett frowned. 'Who else is going?'

'Atlanta's finest, more's the pity: the Meade's, your Aunt and Uncle and not forgetting dear old India Wilkes of course.'

'Do we have to go?' grumbled Scarlett, already picturing a night spent pointedly ignoring the glares being sent her way from half of the guest list.

'And risk missing one of the social events of the season?' Rhett cried in horror. 'Why, my dear, how can you even suggest such a thing? Of course we shall go! I do hate to miss a perfectly good opportunity to be looked down upon after all.'

Unwillingly, Scarlett found herself smiling against his chest, an unfamiliar flush of affection rushing through her at the thought that for once she wouldn't be alone at such a gathering, that her and Rhett could stand proudly together as two of the most unscrupulous and disliked citizens this city had ever had the misfortune to welcome into its fold.

Sensing her laughter, Rhett happily joined in, causing Scarlett to bounce lightly upon his chest as it rose and fell beneath her. Opening her eyes to shush him, her gaze fell instead upon the unexpected sight of his open collar and the short, black hairs that lay beneath.

Her earlier thoughts returning with a vengeance, part of Scarlett itched to reach out and stroke them, to discover whether they felt sharp and rough like the stubble on his chin when he kissed her first thing in the morning or whether they were soft and silky like the ones upon his head that she secretly liked to run her hands through when she was sure he was sleeping.

Looking at them, it struck her suddenly how little she truly knew of his body, how much of it she had refused to even glance at, let alone touch. In fact, in the months since their wedding she had barely gotten to know him at all in that way, preferring to lie passively under him at night before hurriedly rolling away onto her side the moment that it was all over.

She'd never given the matter a thought before, but now she couldn't

help but wonder if he'd ever wished she would touch him more. For, loath as she was to admit it, few things in life had ever made her feel as good as the sensation of his hands upon her. Often she could not help but arch up into his caresses, loving the molten, tingling feeling his fingertips could evoke when they stroked along her skin, raising goose-pimples in their wake and making her sigh from the simple tactile pleasure of it all.

Did Rhett wish that she would touch him like that too? He had never mentioned it before, but then recently she had begun to suspect that there were many things he wanted but chose not to ask for.

Alone, this would not have been enough to spur her into action, for granting Rhett's wishes, unspoken or otherwise, had never been one of her primary concerns. The conversation she'd overheard earlier kept echoing in her mind though and Sylvia's words in particular just would not let her be.

She doesn't even know what it is she's missing out on, she'd said.

Missing out on, as if marital relations were a party to which Scarlett had received no invite. She had always been a jealous creature and the idea that other, lesser women had gotten to experience something that she herself hadn't made her feel decidedly aggrieved. Surely after having put up with the foolishness of three different husband's she had more right than most to enjoy this supposed pleasure. It was positively cruel of Rhett to deny it to her and, if she had her way, she would make it impossible for him to hold out on her any longer.

Fueled by her sudden righteous anger, Scarlett's usual inhibitions faded away and, squaring her jaw in determination, she reached out an unsteady hand towards him.

End
file.